

ORM NEWS

From the Office of the
Deputy Assistant Secretary for
Resolution Management
Department of Veterans Affairs



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From the Deputy Assistant Secretary



Making a Business Case

I have frequently talked about how important it is for managers to provide "business case" reasons for work related decisions. But there's another side to this story. It's also important for employees, in some instances, to make a "business case" to support requests of management. The purpose of the business case is to support the proposition that the request adds value to the organization or that we are adhering to our core principles by granting the request.

For example, promotions to the next grade in a career ladder series must be supported by evidence showing that an employee has met all of the requirements for promotion to the next higher level and, based upon this evidence, consideration should be given to a promotion. Simply expecting or requesting a promotion without evidence that all requirements for promotion (i.e. performance, time in grade) have been met is not enough. Similarly, requests for training should include information that demonstrates that the training is beneficial, not only to the employee, but to the organization – how will this help you in the performance of your job? Simply requesting training without supporting evidence of the value of the training is not enough.

Management business cases and employee business cases are equally important because they enable the decision maker to analyze a request in a thorough and concise manner (all pertinent facts are presented). Taking the time to make a business case is time well spent in support of your objectives.

James S. Jones

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Program Highlights

ORM Customer Service Committee Meeting

By Bettye L. Brown, EEO Counselor, and Randall Mitchell, III, EEO Counselor.

ORM's Customer Service Committee met the week of February 25th in Washington DC to discuss the many goals and objectives of the committee. A thank you goes to Brenda J. Lewis, Customer Service Manager, and Patricia Draucker, EEO Specialist, for organizing this meeting. Committee members had the pleasure of hearing from the following guest speakers:



- James S. Jones, Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS), Resolution Management, talked about the *Role and Responsibility of the Customer Service Representatives and Improving Workplace Environment*.
- Malcolm Porter, Chief Operating Officer (COO), talked about *Defining the Role & Responsibilities of the Customer Service Division-Field Office of Operations*.
- Tyrone Eddins, External Affairs Program Manager, discussed *Public Affairs and Customer Service within ORM – What is the Responsibility of ORM's Public Affairs Office?*
- Terry Washington, Program Analyst, discussed *How ORM's Customer Service Team can Contribute to ORM News – What is the Process and What are the Benefits*.
- Jomoya Mobutu, Office of Diversity Management, Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), talked about *Customer Service Expectations of ORM from a VBA perspective*.
- Arthur Goff, Chief, Affirmative Employment and Civil Rights, Veterans Health Administration (VHA), outlined *Customer Service Expectations of ORM from a VHA perspective*.
- Alison Mangels, Executive Assistant to COO, discussed *Reporting Requirements – Customer Perception of Data Reported by ORM*.
- Denise Bryant, Executive Assistant to the DAS, talked about the *DAS Responsibilities to Higher Level Management and the Level of Customer Service expected from ORM*.

(Continued on the next page.)

- **Peggy Joyner**, Quality Assurance Manager, talked about the *Web Based Tracking System (WBTS) and Customer Service from a Quality Assurance Perspective*.

While in Washington, Committee members visited ORM Headquarters. They also stopped by the Washington Field Office (Mid-Atlantic Operations) and presented a unique lunch bag, designed by the Customer Service Division, with the logo “Winning People-Winning Attitude” to employees in recognition of their 100 percent participation in the most recent employee survey. Congratulations Washington!

Committee members created a “Customer Service” brochure that will be distributed to all employees in the near future. They also developed action items, based on the concerns expressed by ORM employees in the all employee survey conducted in October 2003, for each ORM Customer Service Representative to take back to their respective office. The Customer Service Representatives will then work with managers and employees to develop an action plan to improve our work environments and move ORM closer to becoming an “Employer of Choice”.

The following individuals have been designated Customer Service Representatives for ORM:

Brenda J. Lewis, Customer Service Manager
Patricia Draucker, EEO Specialist, Bay Pines Field Office
Vickye Gammage, EEO Counselor, Long Beach Satellite Office
Patricia Johnson, Administrative Assistant, Office of Policy & Compliance
Gayle Collins, EEO Intake Specialist, Houston Field Office
Cheryl Campbell, EEO Investigator, Washington Field Office
Randall Mitchell, EEO Counselor, Lake City Satellite Office
Sondra Oker, EEO Counselor, Cleveland Field Office
Bettye Brown (alternate), EEO Counselor, Detroit Satellite Office
Bob Moran, EEO Counselor, Lyons Field Office
Rose Eiza, EEO Intake Specialist, Little Rock Field Office

ORM is committed to “Good Customer Service” – providing the best service that we can to our internal and external customers. “Let’s deliver great customer service!” ■

“The voices of our customers are heard and make a difference”

Computer Users Alert!

Have you heard about or used Napster? Napster is one of several free Public Peer-to-Peer (P2P) file-sharing programs that facilitate the sharing of files between individual computers across the Internet.



P2P's are commonly misused for large-scale copyright violations (e.g., the illegal exchange or distribution of copyrighted music, movies, and games) and the widespread proliferation of pornographic material. This software also introduces significant security and privacy risks, to include the potential for inadvertent disclosure of sensitive information and additional paths for the distribution of malicious code (e.g., viruses, Trojans).

What Does this Mean to You?

VA's Office of Information and Technology has issued guidance concerning the use of P2P software on VA information (computer) systems.

- ❑ Public P2P file sharing programs shall **not** be downloaded, installed, or used on any VA information technology (IT) system.
- ❑ VA networks shall **not** be used for any communications associated with public P2P file sharing.
- ❑ The use of public P2P file sharing programs on VA systems or within VA networks is **prohibited**. If detected internally, public P2P file sharing communications will be traced back to their internal origin and appropriate action taken to eliminate the source from the VA network.

The Department of Justice has also announced it is beginning an initiative to identify Government employees who illegally download this type of material at work.

Here's The Bottom Line – *Do not install software on your computer that is not authorized as essential to the accomplishment of your official duties.*

Contact Reggie Ware, ITS Manager, or Bobby Green, ITS Computer Specialist, if you have questions or want additional information concerning this alert. ■



Office Notes

Deputy Secretary Visits Office of the DAS

Deputy Secretary for Veterans Affairs **Gordon H Mansfield** visited the Office of the DAS and the Washington Field Office on March 22, 2004, to tour the office, meet employees, and get an overview of our mission and programs. Mr. Mansfield was nominated to serve as Deputy Secretary by President George W. Bush on November 3, 2003, and confirmed by the Senate on January 22, 2004. He previously served as VA Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Legislative Affairs since August 1, 2001.

William H. Campbell, formerly the Acting Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration (HR&A), has been designated Assistant Secretary for Management by Secretary Principi. Mr. Campbell will continue, in his new position, to provide leadership for HR&A.

Little Rock Field Office – Mid-South Operations

The **Little Rock Field Office** was mentioned in the January/February 2004 *Vanguard* article “Good Neighbor Policy.” This article highlighted community service by VA employees throughout the nation. Little Rock was cited for building and running a photo ID and fingerprinting booth at a local school’s fall carnival, starting an annual career day – which involves a “When I Grow Up” essay, and for sponsoring an art and poetry contest for fifth-graders.

Bay Pines Field Office – Southeastern Operations

Bay Pines welcomes **Kelley Schafer**, EEO Counselor and **Denise Leftridge**, EEO Program Assistant. We also welcome **Jacqueline Velez**, EEO Counselor, who joins us from the Bedford satellite Office. **Rodger Evans** and **Dan Cuff**, EEO Investigators, have been promoted to the position of EEO Intake Specialist effective March 21, 2004. **Kimm Lenox**, EEO Program Assistant, has been promoted to EEO Counselor, effective March 7, 2004. *Congratulations.*

Budget Staff

Welcome **Marilyn Swann** who has rejoined ORM as a Budget Analyst in the Office of the DAS.

Office Notes

Office of Policy and Compliance (OPC)

On May 30, 2003, OPC sponsored a celebration, attended by employees of the DAS staff, Washington Field Office and OPC, to formally welcome **Vernet Fraser** back to work after completing his military service in Kuwait and Iraq. James S. Jones, DAS for ORM, expressed his and ORM's appreciation for Vernet's recent military service. Vernet was presented a number of certificates, proclamations, and letters from Secretary Principi, the Governor of Maryland, two Maryland senators, and the mayors of the District of Columbia and Bowie, Maryland, where Vernet resides. He also received tickets to a Wizards basketball game, a flag flown over the U.S. Capitol, a plaque from ORM, and a military figurine with an inscription from his OPC coworkers. Mr. Jones was also presented a certificate from the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve for "Supporting Employee Participation in Amercia's National Guard and Reserve Force." This event was followed by a luncheon for Vernet at Old Ebbitt Grill in Washington.

Employee Updates

Amber Lyn Fisher, EEO Investigator, Pittsburgh Satellite Office, was recently called to active duty.

Thomas Allen, EEO Counselor, Lake City, FL. Satellite Office has also been called to active duty.

Yuri Walker, a former ORM employee in St. Louis who is now the Director, Quality & Performance Management Section at the St. Louis VA Medical Center, recently won an American College of Legal Medicine student writing competition. Her paper, on a disability law topic, is available at www.aclm.org. Click on *Student Writing Competition* to view her paper.

Did You Know?

Women's History Month

VA proudly joined the Nation in celebrating Women's History Month in March. This year's theme is "**Women Inspiring Hope and Possibility.**"



National Women's History Month grew from an effort to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of women in American history. In 1978, the Education Task Force of the Sonoma County, California, Commission on the Status of Women initiated Women's History Week. In 1987--at the request of museums, libraries, and educators across the country--the National Women's History Project successfully petitioned Congress to expand the celebration to the entire month of March.

Women by the Numbers From the U.S. Census Bureau

1.6 million – Number of women who are military veterans; another 164,000 currently serve in the armed forces.

56 – The percentage of college students who are women. Women have constituted the majority of college students since 1979.

61 – Percentage of women, age 18 and over and citizens, who cast a ballot in the last presidential election. This compares with 58% of their male counterparts. Among all voting-age people, women have voted at higher rates than men in every presidential election since 1984.

145 million – The number of females in the U.S. as of July 1, 2001. That exceeds the number of males, who numbered 139.8 million. Males outnumber females in every age group through ages 30 to 34. Starting with 35 to 39 year-olds, women outnumber men. At 85 and over, there are more than twice as many women as men. ■

Hatch Act Guidance



In this election year, it is important that federal employees know about the Hatch Act.

What is the Hatch Act?

The Hatch Act governs political activity by government employees at the federal, state and local levels. Here are some of the Do's and Don'ts for political activity by government employees:

Do:

- ☐ Be candidates for public office in nonpartisan elections.
- ☐ Register and vote as they choose.
- ☐ Assist in voter registration drives.
- ☐ Express opinions about candidates and issues.
- ☐ Contribute money to political organizations.
- ☐ Attend political fundraising functions.
- ☐ Attend and be active at political rallies and meetings.
- ☐ Join and be active members of political parties and clubs.
- ☐ Sign nominating petitions.
- ☐ Campaign for or against referendum questions, constitutional amendments, or municipal ordinances.
- ☐ Campaign for or against candidates in partisan elections.
- ☐ Make campaign speeches for candidates in partisan elections.
- ☐ Distribute campaign literature in partisan elections.
- ☐ Hold office in political parties or clubs.

Don't:

- ☐ Engage in political activity while:
 - On duty
 - In a government office
 - Wearing insignia identifying your office or position
 - Using a government vehicle
- ☐ Wear partisan political buttons on duty.
- ☐ Solicit, accept or receive political contributions from anyone (with a very narrow exception in certain circumstances for solicitations of other federal employees for contributions to federal labor organizations and certain other employee organizations).
- ☐ Knowingly solicit or discourage political activity of anyone who has business before his or her agency.
- ☐ Run for public office in a partisan political election.

Penalties for violating the Hatch Act range from a 30-day suspension without pay to removal from federal service. ■

Want to Improve Your Customer Service Skills?

VA Learning University offers a variety of Web based courses to both employees and managers involved in providing customer service to both internal and external customers. Examples of the available courses are:



Building the Service Foundation: Corporate Culture

Audience: Front line staff, managers, and team leaders.

3.5 Hours Earned

This is the first course in VA's Customer Service series and focuses on building the foundation of good customer service. At the completion of this course, you'll be able to develop a step-by-step action plan that sets the tone for quality service.

Sustaining Excellent Customer Service

Audience: Front-line employees, managers, supervisors, customer service agents.

3.5 Hours Earned

This course teaches you how to promote excellent customer service behavior by reinforcing and rewarding employees for their efforts. It also provides tools for you to address extreme service recovery situations. The practical know-how that you'll gain from this course will encourage you to take your organization to customer-service giant status.

To find out more about available customer service courses, visit VA's Learning University Catalog at <http://vaww.sites.lrn.va.gov/VACatalog/>. Type "customer service" under "Keyword" for a full listing of available customer service courses. ■

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